

because of the character, determination, and indomitable spirit our people demonstrated time and again.

That character and spirit have never been more evident than when Americans have been held captive as prisoners of war. Suffering hunger, fear, isolation, and uncertainty, stripped of their freedom and often subjected to physical and psychological torture, American POWs nonetheless continued to serve our Nation with honor, dignity, and remarkable courage. For many, the long, agonizing days stretched into years, and the loss of freedom and the cruel separation from family, home, and friends left scars that the passage of time can never erase.

We owe a profound debt of gratitude to these heroes who stood face to face with the forces of tyranny and oppression, true to our country and to the spirit of freedom even in captivity. We owe a debt as well to their families, whose faith and fortitude have been an unceasing source of strength to our Nation in many of our darkest hours. As we observe this special day for the first time in this new century, let us remember and honor the sacrifices of America's prisoners of war and their families; and let us keep faith with them by remaining resolute in defending liberty and securing a just and peaceful world for the generations to come.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 9, 2000, as National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day. I call upon all Americans to join me in remembering former American prisoners of war who suffered the hardships of enemy captivity. I also call upon Federal, State, and local government officials and private organizations to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies, programs, and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eighth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 7290 of April 10, 2000

National Crime Victims' Rights Week, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

This week marks the 20th anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Over the past two decades, we have made enormous progress in our efforts to build safer communities and to reshape our criminal justice system so that it better protects victims' rights and responds more compassionately to their needs.

In the 7 years since I first proclaimed National Crime Victims' Rights Week, my Administration has worked hard to achieve some of the most progressive criminal justice reforms in our Nation's history. Recognizing the urgent plea from millions of Americans to restore safety

and security to their neighborhoods, in 1994 I signed into law the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which funds 100,000 additional police officers to fight crime and protect our citizens. In Federal court cases, this law also gives victims of violent crime and sexual abuse the right to speak out in court before sentencing, providing them the opportunity to describe the impact such victimization has had on their lives. To help protect our communities from gun violence, we enacted the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, requiring background checks for potential handgun purchasers. Since its passage, more than 500,000 attempted gun purchases by felons, fugitives, and other prohibited persons have been prevented, saving an untold number of lives. And we worked to pass the assault weapons ban to keep these deadly firearms off our streets.

We also fought to pass the Violence Against Women Act, which addresses the complex dynamics of gender-motivated violence and seeks to ensure justice for women who live in daily fear for their safety and often for their lives. By providing support services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and empowering prosecutors with new tools to target offenders, we have sent a clear message that our society will not tolerate violence against women.

Thanks to the concerted efforts of crime victims' advocates, many of whom are survivors themselves, government at all levels is focused on ensuring victims' rights. Today, all States have enacted laws safeguarding crime victims' rights in the criminal justice process, and 32 States have amended their constitutions accordingly.

Despite this progress, millions of Americans still fall prey to criminals each year. In the past year alone, gun violence alone has taken an enormous toll across our Nation. To address this, my Administration has proposed the 21st Century Policing Initiative to provide 50,000 more police officers for our streets, requested more funding for our Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative to reduce school and youth violence, and put forth the largest national gun enforcement initiative in our Nation's history. I continue to call on the Congress to strengthen our Nation's hate crime laws and to pass commonsense gun legislation to keep guns out of the wrong hands; and we should pass the Victims' Rights Amendment to the Constitution.

Criminal victimization is at its lowest level in 25 years, but we can do more. As we observe National Crime Victims' Rights Week, as we near the fifth anniversary of the tragic bombing in Oklahoma City and the first anniversary of the shooting at Columbine High School, let us vow to continue working together to prevent crime and violence. Let us also pledge to honor the needs and rights of victims whose lives have been forever altered by crime. And let us recognize the courage and determination of the thousands of men and women across our country who dedicate themselves daily to the protection of victims' rights.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 9 to April 15, 2000, as National Crime Victims' Rights Week. I urge all Americans to remember crime victims and their families by working to reduce violence, to assist those harmed by crime, and to

make our communities and homes safer places in which to live and raise our families.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this tenth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 7291 of April 12, 2000

National D.A.R.E. Day, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Children face many challenges in today's complex society. Peer pressure to abuse drugs and alcohol; negative influences in films, music, television, and videos; school violence; gang activities; fear and low self-esteem—any or all of these pressures can lead young people to make unwise choices that can jeopardize their future and even their lives. Since 1983, however, there has been a strong positive influence in the lives of America's children that is helping them to navigate safely through these dangers and uncertainties: Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.).

D.A.R.E. was developed jointly by the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles Unified School District and continues to draw its strength from partnerships among law enforcement officials, schools, parents, and communities. Under the program, specially trained police officers conduct classroom lessons designed to teach children from kindergarten through the 12th grade how to make healthy choices, overcome negative influences, avoid destructive behavior, and resist the lure of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.

The D.A.R.E. curriculum has several components designed to meet the changing needs of students as they mature. From the visitation program for children in kindergarten and the early elementary school years to the core curriculum for highly vulnerable fifth and sixth graders to reinforcement programs for middle school, junior high, and senior high students, D.A.R.E. helps young people of all ages develop the skills and self-confidence to recognize and resist negative influences. And this year, D.A.R.E. has pledged to use a specialized curriculum to reach out to thousands of parents and help them talk to their children about drugs.

My Administration is also taking forceful measures to help our young people make the decision to reject drugs. We are continuing to expand the unprecedented National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign in order to change the attitudes of an entire generation of young people; a campaign that is working across all race, gender, grade level, and income lines. The campaign is already paying dividends for American families: studies show that growing numbers of parents are talking to their children about the dangers of drug use, and youth drug use is down 13 percent in just one year. We have also expanded the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program and the Drug-Free Communities program.